

COULDN'T SKIN HIM AT POKER

The men folks at the Old White Sulphur Springs were scouting around the other afternoon trying to assemble enough likely looking instigators for a little game of draw at one of the Paradise Row cottages for bachelors. It was a bit early in the Old White season and most of the regulars, some of whom have been battling away at each other in the Old White poker game for forty summers, were still absent.

The difficulty encountered in getting a round table bunch together reminded Colonel John Taylor of Cincinnati of a story.

"I've got a Kentucky crony," he said, "who would rather play poker than slip mint juleps on a second story piazza and I can't make it any stronger than that, seeing that he was born and raised in the Blue Grass country. For all that, he still plays the barnyard game and he is not very lucky."

"He was ordered by his medical man to take a voyage to Europe a few summers ago for his health and he ran up to Cincinnati and dragged me into it. I figured that it would be the decent thing, anyhow, to go along with him and protect him from the poker sharks, for I knew that if he went alone, he'd be liable to sit into games with people that carried their burglars' kits right in their hands."

"Well, I had to do everything but beat him on the head to keep him out of a couple of perfectly palpable poker deadfalls on the train ride to New York, and at the New York hotel I had to keep a hold of his arm every minute while he was awake to prevent him from organizing himself into committee of one to form impromptu draw fiestas from the gang of sharp-eyed good thing grafters that were hanging around the corridors of the hostelry waiting for nothing better than marks of the cut and style of my Kentucky friend."

"On the steamer it was still worse, for he's got a sort of frank, come on way about him that caused the card sharks who were making the voyage to gaze at him with positive hunger in their eyes. Three or four of them did essay to buzz him to the sitting in point, but I suppose my glares frightened them away. My friend looked at me reproachfully when I took these steps to protect him."

"But, for all my wisdom, I myself was fooled by a couple of the poker fanatics on the third day out. Began talking with a pair of substantial looking chaps of thirty or so at dinner on that day. One of them said he was a commission merchant in Cleveland, and he rattled off the names of a lot of Ohio people whom I knew. Agreeable fellow. The other one said he was a government official in Washington and had decent way about him, too."

"After luncheon that third day, noticing that my friend was still glancing wolfishly into the card room every time we passed it on our post prandial constitutional, I inadvertently said to him:

"Major, I don't want to subject you to any deprivations of any sort on this trip, but if you must and will frivol around with cards, why don't you exhibit enough perception to pick out as fellow players a couple of obviously square men like those two young fellows we were talking with at luncheon?"

"I hadn't got the words out of my mouth before he released himself from my clutch and started aft at a sort of ship lode."

"Wonder where I can find 'em?" he said, and then I had to trot after him and presently we came upon the two agreeable chaps leaning over the aft rail, and my friend, without any beating around the bush, suggested a little game of \$10 limit to them. Both said they were a bit rusty at the game, but they were willing, just to glide away the time."

"And so we began the four-handed seance, playing with a stripped deck—everything out of the deck down to the sixes—so as to save all the dealing that an all jackpot game involves in a four-handed sitting when the whole pack is used. The stripped game is pretty hot, seeing that at that game threes are imbecile, a straight just foolish and a small full only fair to middling, but it's as fair for one as for another when all hands are used to the values of the cards."

"My Kentucky friend was the happiest human being I ever saw in my life when we began the game, and when he went right out in front from the tap of the drum, hoarfing in all of the money in sight he positively shone with joy. He continued to enjoy himself just as much when the tide turned against him."

"It wasn't until the game was three or four of the afternoon hours old that I caught the man who pretended to be a Cleveland commission man at an adroit bit of juggle cheating. He was sitting at the right of

his companion, and it was gradually borne in upon me that when he dealt the cards he paid a lot of attention out of the left hand corner of his eye to the cards he was dealing to his mate, who on his part picked the cards up one by one as they were dealt—in every practice even for a square player—so that the man dealing them could get the right kind of a peek."

"Now it's pretty easy to fill another man's hand when you're playing with a stripped deck if you've got the mechanical sleight of hand to get away with it after you see what your companion in crime has got in his fist. The man who was accidentally on purpose showing his hand to the dealer kept up a great line of conversation, directed at myself and my Kentucky friend, while the play I was watchful for came off, but it didn't serve."

"He discarded one, and the dealer, in discarding, made a lightning flick of a card from his hand on to the top of the main pack. That was the card to fill his mate's flush, and with the stripped deck a flush beats a full house. I didn't say a word, but I gave my Kentucky friend a kick on the leg under the table."

"He was so immersed with the ace full that he wholly ignored my kick and went ahead betting himself black in the face on what looked to be the splendid papers in his hand, until I gave him a kick that made him wince, and then, gazing at me with surprise and mute reproach, he called the man. The latter's flush took the big heap of chips in the center and just then all hands in the card room got up to go to dinner and we followed suit. The two crooks went ahead of us, and I got the major planned to a stanchion."

"It's my fault," I said to him, "I'm responsible. I am perfectly willing that you should put it up to me. But we play no more with those two fellows. They're thieves. I caught them in the act in that last deal."

"At first he looked astonished, but as I gave him the details of what I had seen he began to look mournful."

"And so," I concluded, "your poker playing on this voyage is at an end."

"He gazed out in a sort of disappointed way at the heaving sea, and then turning a pleading countenance upon me, he said:

"Kunel, don't you all break it up, for God sake. Why, man, there ain't any other game that we can get into, sub, within 1,500 miles o' heah, suh!"

Then Tom Middleton of South Carolina and New York told one about a poker player who'd got religion."

"Met him at Asheville last winter," said Mr. Middleton, "for the first time in a number of years. Back yonder in the '80s and '90s he certainly had something on all the poker players of Charleston, and there were and are some great ones in Charleston."

"Year in and year out in Charleston he was wont to clean up. He knew the game backward, and I reckon he'd forgot more about the blue Etruscan tracery that's only to be made out by a microscope on the inside of the shell of the game of draw than any of the rest of us had ever known."

"But he was sure a changed man when I met him at Asheville last winter. I'd heard from somebody or other that he'd got religion, but I didn't know that it had hit him real bad. But when, one rainy evening, I was snooping around trying to herd up about seven to sit into a little game of the \$5 kind and asked this old friend of mine who'd got religion if he was going to make one of us he staked me to a gaze that was both sad and sweet."

"My boy," he said, "I thought everybody knew that I had mended my evil ways. I don't play poker any more. I am a member of the church. I am not averse to an occasional game of cards by way of amusement—but no poker—no, sir—no poker. Poker, sir, is a game of deceit. It is a game that enables a man to deceive his friends out of their money!"

"Grand," said I. "I wish I had two bits for every time you deceived me back yonder in Charleston when I was—"

"Poker, my boy," he cut in on me, "is a game of pure deceit, an underhand, treacherous, stab-in-the-back method of gambling. I am through with it, sir. Yes, sir, I certainly am through with it."

"I got together the requisite number for the game that evening, and my Charleston friend who had in getting religion developed such a disapproving view toward the game of draw, followed the troupe over to the cottage to watch the game."

"There is no sin to watch it," he explained to me, rather elaborately, on the way over. "There is sin in the world all around one, and one has to live in the midst of it, and, in a way, participate in the results of it."

"It was a right tidy game, and my Charleston friend, sitting behind my chair, watched it with a kindling eye

that became more fevered and sparkling every minute the game progressed. He shook his head sadly, too, over some of my poker errors, for he was in a position to see my hands, and occasionally he'd lean over and breathe maledictions into my ear for something peculiarly fat headed that I'd done with my papers, according to his really expert view."

"Toward midnight one of the seven in the game had to drop out in order to write some letters at his cottage for the morning mail."

"Oh, here, kick in, parson," I said to my friend from Charleston who'd got religion. "Take that empty chair over yonder. You're due to be trimmed. Overdue. Come on in. The splashing's fine."

"I could see by his hungry eyes that a great tumult was going on in his breast."

"It's five dollar limit you all are playing, isn't it?" he said, finally, after a long pause, in a hoarse tone that told of his inner conflict."

"Five dollar limit," said I.

"Well, I'm glad of that," said he, as he made the empty chair in two strides and plumped into the seat, "because, sub, five dollars is the limit in the 'Piscopal church!'"

"Then he bought a stack and cleaned the lot of us to a fare-you-well."

Cobalt Mines.

Cobalt, like Goldfield and Tonopah, has a wonderful development in a short time. Its history has practically been of less than three years' duration. It is the center of a district supporting from 5,000 to 6,000 people, directly or indirectly engaged in mining silver. Twenty mines are now shipping ore and fifteen more are ready to ship, so one may say that there are thirty-five shipping mines in the district: not over five miles from Cobalt as a center. All the ore, with the exception of two cases, is being taken from a depth of less than 200 feet, the greater portion being from less than 100 feet in depth. Hitherto the policy has been to ship ore as quickly as possible, irrespective of the cost of production or of the conditions in which the workings were left. This policy must change, and at once, for now that the snow and ice are melting the surface cuts and shafts, left without support, are falling in. To keep up production larger plants must be installed, and to mine economically the "get-rich-quick" methods must be changed to mining methods whereby preserves are being created as the ore is exhausted. We find now that many mines are passing their usual dividends and holding their cash for new machinery and for prospecting new ground. It may be that some of the veins have proved too uncertain for profitable mining, and that others must be sought, or it may be too much has been spent on prospecting without results. At all events, the second stage of development has been reached. First, a hurried production to boom stock; second, the inevitable reaction. The third stage will be legitimate mining. Now, here is the question, and the only one on which there is a doubt. The surface ores are rich and the surface ores are rich and the conditions be below 150 or 200 feet?

A few mines have gone below this and the results have been kept secret. Some have not gone so deep, with poor results—that is, the veins have pinched to almost nothing, while the majority have not gone below 75 feet. All one can say is, that the mines are unproven, in depth, with indications not very favorable for the life of the camp. Possibly a poor zone may be followed by another enrichment, but indications point to rich shipping ore on the surface, or within 150 feet of the surface, and low grade milling ore below this."

Individual mines may disprove this but the results attained in the mines that have gone below that depth being kept secret, one can only judge by the development open to the public."

One of the worst features of Cobalt is the number of irresponsible mine superintendents who issue false reports to boom their respective mines, so that one hardly knows what to believe without personal inspection. These men are fairly good at gonging out surface ores, but know little of actual mining operations. It is only fair to say that this class is being replaced by practical men and the others are entering the ranks of "mining engineers," but in Cobalt, at least, the title of mining engineer does not signify very much.—Los Angeles Mining Review.

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No race in the world is more governed by superstition than the negro; his life is filled with fatal periods and unlucky days, and his nights are haunted by visions of witches, elves and demons. In parts of the southland among negroes who are far removed from civilization, the chief religious consolation is devil worship. I mean the southern negro, the kinky-haired, low-browed, almost chinless negro, who delights in becoming frightened and whose belief in a personal devil acts upon him as a soothing syrup would upon a child. This belief is hereditary, descended from time immemorial, when the negro's forbears worshiped Mumbo Jumbo in the depths of the African forests.

His faith, if you can call it such, is governed by what you might call a cult of superstition, with which every negro comes enveloped at birth; all the Biblical instruction in the world cannot change his religious perversity, for it is from the Bible the negro draws no small portion of his philosophy of life, and while he may take a passage here and there too literally, yet he derives a satisfaction from the Bible, and he probably would assail more truculently an enemy thereof than one who had done him personal wrong. He finds unctious for his soul in such passages of Scripture as "Take no thought for the morrow," "The Lord will provide," "Lay ye not up treasure on earth," "Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin," "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble," "Take a little wine for the stomach's sake," and many others too numerous to mention.

Then, again, an overexuberance of enthusiasm at a revival meeting results in a religious frenzy which exceeds all bounds of common understanding and which changes to positive devil worship. In the cotton fields of the "low grounds" and the tobacco patches of "new ground," remote from civilization, religious orgies are to be witnessed occasionally where the hymns sung under the leadership of some itinerant darky evangelist have been transposed to meet the requirements of the devil dancers.

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I would prefer that my religion should be, to love God and pity man.

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